

[EXTRACT FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES]

EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Explanatory Second Reading Speech

by

The Hon. NORMAN LACY, M.P.

MINISTER OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

in the Legislative Assembly on

10 September 1981



PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

Education (Amendment) Bill

Mr LACY (Minister of Educational Services)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

It was introduced by my colleague the Minister of Education in another place during the last sessional period of Parliament and circulated to all honourable members. Therefore it is not new to the Parliament.

It is now being re-introduced in this place for technical reasons as it is deemed to provide a new structure for the Education Department.

The Bill has already had substantial public airing, and all interested parties have had an opportunity to consider the implications of the Bill over the past three or four months. Many comments have been received from organizations seeking representation on the various bodies, and these have been given close consideration.

From representations made during the recess it would appear that there is an impression that membership of the Victorian Education Council will be limited to those named in clause 8 (3). In fact, the total number of members will be determined from time to time.

At present, the Government contemplates a membership of a little more than 20 persons, which would enable the council to be broadly based and representative of a wide range of interests.

It will not be possible however to accommodate the aspirations of all interests which have sought representation, although the views of all who have made submissions will be taken into account in making the final appointments.

Following consideration of comments made to date, the Bill is being presented again in the same form as it took in the autumn session. This will not preclude the consideration of amendments during the Committee stage, after all representations received until then have been fully evaluated.

The Bill represents the first stage in the legislative framework required for the implementation of the White Paper on "Strategies and Structures for

Education in Victorian Government Schools" which was released in December 1980, and the Government now wishes to proceed with the legislation as quickly as possible. Considerable progress has already been made towards the implementation of the White Paper.

Since December last, a top-level steering committee has met regularly under my chairmanship, to oversee the implementation process. As well, a leading firm of management consultants—P.A. Australia—with extensive experience in administrative reform and reorganization of Government bodies, and in the comprehensive review and restructuring of a number of school systems, was engaged to assist the steering committee in the implementation of the White Paper.

Since May of this year, an implementation task force under the guidance of the consultants has worked assiduously in the preparation of options, strategies and detailed plans for organizational change.

The decision taken by the Government that the implementation process should be managed neither by a completely internal process nor by a wholly external one has proved to be fully justified. The objectivity and new perspectives of those external to the Education Department have been balanced by the knowledge and insights of those who are familiar with the organization, thus ensuring that the many valuable features of the present structures are retained, whilst at the same time ensuring that the new policies expressed in the White Paper are brought to fruition.

The implementation task force completed a programme of more than 250 interviews with officers of the Education Department and of various organizations affecting the department. The information obtained was carefully analysed in order to identify positions carrying key decision-making responsibility and to examine the relationships which exist among the various units of the department.

This analysis enabled the task force to identify the parameters of organizational change and the areas where atten-

tion is required to eliminate duplicated activity, unproductive or inefficient effort and obsolescence.

The first target date for the implementation task force was 17 July last when two reports were presented to the Minister of Education and me. These reports, which were received on schedule, will provide a basis for the recommendations concerning structural change to be made by the consultants later this month.

The first report entitled *Victorian Education Department: The Present Organisation* was designed to provide a data base for decisions on organizational issues during the second phase of the study, and to act as a checklist for proposed organizational structures so that all functions are accounted for.

The second report, *Present and Future context for the Victorian Education Department*, explores the potential future context which could affect the Department in the next twenty years.

It is important to appreciate that the implementation programme is not simply a re-deployment exercise, but is concerned with the structural changes required at central, regional and community levels to achieve appropriate measures of decentralization and devolution in educational governance. This report considers the characteristics of the present Victorian Education Regions, makes projections concerning the size of the education system to the year 2001, and examines the nature of the education task in 1991 and beyond.

The findings of these reports provide significant reasons for the Government's initiative in fostering change within the Education Department. The primary challenge of Government in respect of education in the future will be to achieve innovation without the impetus of significant growth in the system as a whole.

Changes in the structuring of the education system will be tempered by the expectations which local communities hold for their schools. These expectations are likely to involve increasing demands that personal and social development, competency in language,

mathematics and communications, and acquisition of the knowledge and skills which will assist in career choice and in finding employment be given an extremely high priority in the education system, as is indeed already occurring.

The growth of multiculturalism is expected to be a predominant trend and will have an even greater impact on educational policies and practices in the future than at present. Technological changes will also cause change in schools, and the coming decades will also see increased provision for life-long learning and for universality of access to education, with the likely retention of a more universal growth of pupils to Year 12.

An education system needs to be structured so that it can adapt itself to meet these challenges. Adaptability and flexibility are important organizational design criteria in the development of new structures in education.

The substance of these reports has been made widely known through a series of implementation newsletters distributed throughout the State to maintain awareness of the implementation process. Copies of both reports are also available for reference in the Education Department library and divisional and regional offices.

The consultants are due to present their final report on structural reorganization of the department to the steering committee and the Ministers at the end of next week, September 18. I am assured that the report will be delivered on time, and wish to advise the House that a Ministerial statement arising from its consideration will be made as soon as possible thereafter.

The importance of an early statement will be obvious; the report will propose details of a new senior administrative structure and of job specifications which will affect many senior officers in the department. Any delay in a firm announcement making clear provision for the future would be unfair to them and damaging to their morale and to the interests of the department.

Passage of this Bill is a prerequisite for enabling the structures envisaged by the White Paper—which will be

further elaborated in the report and the Ministerial statement—to be put into place with a minimum of delay. Immediately the proposed legislation is passed it is proposed to advertise the positions arising from the new structure and then to proceed to make all appointments so that certainty can be given as quickly as possible to those affected by the re-organization. It will be appreciated therefore that passage of the legislation has a very high priority and the Government invites the co-operation of all honourable members in ensuring that the Bill is dealt with speedily in order to best serve the interests of those who may be affected by it.

It is appropriate to foreshadow that the Government will consider the desirability of further legislation on staffing matters and employment structures when the report mentioned above is to hand and that it should not therefore be thought that the present measure purports to resolve all the problems which may emerge.

As an explanatory memorandum is attached to the Bill, I do not intend to go through it clause by clause. Honourable members will note, however, that the Bill provides for appointment of the Victorian Education Council and regional councils and the establishment of a Registered Schools Board to provide for the registration of non-Government schools and teachers consequent upon the phasing out of the Council of Public Education.

The Bill also makes provision for two matters which do not relate directly to the implementation of the White Paper. These are the recognition of the title and role of the Minister of Educational Services and provision to enable joint arrangements with municipalities, now used so effectively and extensively, to operate with respect to leasehold property.

It is emphasized that the Bill does not attempt to deal with the educational questions raised in the White Paper, and that it is confined to structural matters. Identification and resolution of educational issues raised in the paper will represent a further stage in the implementation process.

To assist in that process it is the intention of the Government to reconvene the organizations reference group as soon as possible to create further avenues for the contribution of interested parties and organizations and to enable, through consultative processes, the participation and involvement of persons and organizations interested in the improvement of education in Victoria.

The longer term objective both of the current re-organization and of this measure is to facilitate the administration and delivery of education in this State in the best possible manner in the interests of Victorian children. I commend the Bill to the House.